



How Executives and Boards Can Improve Performance

Two books zero in on tactics to assure a high-functioning board.

By Terrence Fernsler

Getting the Best from Your Board: An Executive's Guide to a Successful Partnership

By Sherill K. Williams & Kathleen A. McGinnis. 73 pages. Softcover. BoardSource, www.boardsource.org.

Nonprofit executives sometimes get so mired in day-to-day operations that they lose sight of the reason for what they're doing. One way to reconnect to the mission and how it impacts people is to ask board members why they're committed to the organization. Tips like this one make *Getting the Best From Your Board* a valuable book for executives and boards.

A nonprofit chief executive is responsible for the executive-board partnership, which will determine the organization's performance. The executive must translate the board's concepts into practices and programs, sharing information to engage the board in strategic questions.

The book explains how the executive can enhance the executive-board relationship in six vital ways:

Cultivate a passion for the organization's mission.

Build habits and interactions that engage the board in a constructive partnership.

Inspire board members with information about the organization's history, culture, perceptions, and community context.

Prepare the board by sharing information and demonstrating meaningful communication.

Help balance expectations, and solicit and offer constructive feedback.

Involve board members by creating a process for their activities and encouraging them to open doors to resources and relationships.

The qualities of a true partnership—support, trust, honesty, respect, forthrightness, and understanding—must flow both ways. Such an alliance between the executive and board chair is crucial to the organization's success.



Leaders must intervene directly, humanely, promptly, and with unity.

Taming the Troublesome Board Member

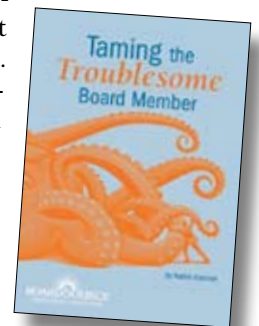
By Katha Kissman. 102 pages. Softcover. BoardSource, www.boardsource.org.

A board member's bad behavior can be one of the greatest detriments to an organization. The first step to a resolution is recognizing that the behavior stems from something specific and tailoring a solution to the unique situation. The next step is for leaders to intervene directly, humanely, promptly, and with unity.

Effective conflict resolution is easiest to achieve when people treat each other with dignity and respect. The strategies in this book emphasize that fact. With sound guidance, Katha Kissman addresses such behaviors as disrupting meetings, micromanaging, deviating from the mission, publicly criticizing the organization, or being derailed by conflicts of interest. Kissman also explains what to do about illegal activity, emotional issues, founder's syndrome, and troublesome board-chair or chief-executive behavior.

Figuring out the cause of troublesome behavior in any context starts with compassion and understanding. The most effective approach is to address the behavior, not judge the person. It all comes down to human interaction and relationship-building.

Using one's talents, skills, and experience on a nonprofit board should be a satisfying experience. Resolving troublesome behavior can renew energy and commitment to the organization for all board members. *Taming the Troublesome Board Member* provides excellent suggestions for handling such behavior and improving board performance. ■



Ask board members why they're committed to the organization.

Terrence Fernsler has been a nonprofit professional for nearly 30 years.